



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Commercial King Mackerel Hook-and-Line Fishing Closing In the Southern Florida West Coast Subzone

Commercial fishing for Gulf group king mackerel in the Florida southern subzone is **closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, March 17, 2013**, for commercial hook-and-line vessels. NOAA Fisheries has determined the 2012/2013 commercial quota of 607,614 pounds of king mackerel from this subzone will be reached by this date. The closure will remain in effect through the end of the fishing year, June 30, 2012.

From November 1 through March 31, the southern subzone is that part of the Florida west coast zone off Collier and Monroe Counties, Florida. This is the area south and west from 25° 20.4' N. lat. (a line directly east from the Miami-Dade/Monroe County boundary on the east coast of Florida) to 26° 19.8' N. lat. (a line directly west from the Lee/ Collier County boundary on the west coast of Florida).

Beginning April 1, the boundary between Atlantic and Gulf groups of king mackerel shifts south and west from the Flagler/Volusia County boundary on the Florida east coast to the Monroe/Collier County boundary on the Florida west coast. Therefore, beginning April 1, the closed southern subzone is reduced to the area off Collier County, Florida, between 25° 48' N. lat. and 26° 19.8' N. lat., and Monroe County re-opens to commercial king mackerel fishing for Atlantic group king mackerel.

Closure of the commercial king mackerel hook-and-line component in the Gulf of Mexico Florida southern subzone complies with regulations implemented under the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. The closure is necessary to protect the Gulf group king mackerel resource. In cooperative actions,

the state of Florida will close commercial harvest of king mackerel by hook-and-line concurrently in adjoining state waters.

During the closure period, no person aboard a vessel for which a commercial permit for king mackerel has been issued may use hook-and-line gear to harvest or possess Gulf group king mackerel in federal waters of the closed subzone. There is one exception, however, for a person aboard a charter vessel or headboat. A person aboard a vessel that has a valid charter/headboat permit and also has a commercial king mackerel permit for coastal migratory pelagic fish may continue to retain king mackerel in or from the closed subzone under the 2-fish daily bag limit, provided the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat. Charter vessels or headboats that hold a commercial king mackerel permit are considered to be operating as a charter vessel or headboat when they carry a passenger who pays a fee or when more than three persons are aboard, including operator and crew.

During the closure, no king mackerel caught in the closed subzone may be purchased, bartered, traded, or sold. This includes recreational and tournament-caught fish. The prohibition of sale, however, does not apply to trade in king mackerel that were harvested, landed ashore and bartered, traded, or sold before the closure and held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.